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ABSTRACT

Several external degree programs of institutions in the United States are described. Some of the unique factors featured in these programs are: geographically accessible learning centers, few or no residency requirements, student designated curricula, independent study programs, and work experience programs. Florida International University, the University of Alabama in Tuscolcosa, and Eagle University, Kentucky, have designed programs to meet the needs of nontraditional students. At Florida International University emphasis is on a noncampus-based view of education, assessment of past experiences, and negotiated, individual learning contracts. Some students need greater flexibility in scheduling courses, counseling, and financial assistance. Other students, with few credentials but with rich backgrounds of experience, need greater flexibility in the definition and certification of educational experience. Those individuals who are geographically remote or unable to commute to a campus, the physically handicapped, prison inmates, servicemen, and women constitute a large group of potential students. Numerous colleges that offer alternative learning arrangements and services are noted. It is proposed that considerable leadership from the college administrators is necessary to provide external degree programs to meet identified educational needs. (SW)

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THE ADMINISTRATOR AND NON-TRADITIONAL EDUCATIONAL DELIVERY SYSTEMS

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HE 011 609

THE ADMINISTRATOR AND NON-TRADITIONAL EDUCATIONAL DELIVERY SYSTEMS

The society in which we live is inevitably a dynamic society, a society in which people's needs and interests are continuously changing. Such continuous changes require continuous planning and revising institutional efforts if they are to meet the changing needs and interests.

If our institutions of higher education are to respond effectively to the needs and interests of today's dynamic and diversified society, there can be no laxity in planning and revising our educational delivery systems. Throughout the country, literature in the field continue to emphasize the importance of promoting more flexibility in curriculum offering, more geographically accessible learning and the need to serve new segments in our society. More specifically, there are those who would like to return to a college or university to continue their education, but they are full-time workers, married and have children. There are others who just don't have the time to travel long distances to attend classes once or twice during the week. There are those who feel that the traditional course requirements, class attendance, etc. are just bull and have no relation or significance to their job and/or career. And, there are those who are senior citizens and don't want courses for credit or a degree, but just want

to add some meaning and purpose to their life, to have something to look forward to.

Of course, the mere mention of change and innovation is a threat, not only in institutions of higher education but also in and among organizations, agencies, etc., throughout the country. Social scientists contends that tradition gives people a feeling of security and protection, free from uncertainty and risk. Departure from tradition tends to remove such security blankets and generates stress, distress and eventually resistance. It is the author's contention that innovation and change is the foundation of our society, it is inevitable. Administrators must be change agents.

Are the on-campus enrollments down at your institution? Are you able to project your enrollment of full-time equivalent students within a few hundred? Are studies done by institutional research to determine why on-campus enrollments are down, what areas are being served and which are not - and why not? Do you find non-traditional programs from "out of town" (New York, Ohio, California and many others) moving into your territory to serve your students? Do you find this competition getting tougher to deal with?

These are only a few of the questions that must be critically thought out and dealt with. Non-traditional programs are blooming throughout this country. Competition is getting worse. Non-traditional study, according to Gauld and Cross, "may be defined in simplest terms as a group of

changing educational patterns caused by the changing needs and opportunities of society.... current perceptions of the needs of new and hitherto unserved segments of our population, together with strong dissatisfaction with results from those segments traditionally served, have now catapulted non-traditional study to the forefront of public attention..... I want to identify some patterns that characterize non-traditional education as it is currently perceived, applying them to higher education but not necessarily limiting them to that level.... The first set of patterns is woven around the philosophy of full educational opportunity. Its goal is to assure each individual, regardless of age, previous formal education, or circumstances of life, the amount and type of education that will add to and develop his potential as a person.... The second set of patterns emerge logically from the first. It includes elements of structure, method, content, and procedures that combine to create a new flexibility in education.... The final set of patterns concerns individualized learning. There are two elements in this: individualized opportunity, whereby each student searches for the kind of education suitable and necessary for himself, and individualized responsibility, whereby each student, having decided on his educational goal and course of action, documents his motivation by satisfying progress toward his goal."[1]

Trivett further elaborates on non-traditional education as having the following characteristics. "In non-traditional education emphasis is on the student as learner, on his achievement, and on the provision of materials and processes to expedite or promote that achievement. Less emphasis is on where, and how learning occurs."[2] Non-traditional higher education, says Kimmel, "is a movement toward increasing the options open to an individual in the pursuit of post secondary education. Its major emphasis is in recognition of individual differences and making institutions more flexible in response to them."[3]

THE EXTERNAL DEGREE DELIVERY SYSTEM

Many administrators have gotten the message and others have not. The message is simply this - education, traditional in nature and approach is seriously being questioned and challenged today by concerned groups, organizations and individuals. The questions and challenges are for educational delivery systems that caters to the learners educational, vocational and personal-social needs. Out of such dire needs have evolved External Degree Programs.

Schulman presented a research paper on the External Degree Program. Her findings indicated that, "The External Degree Programs are those educational programs that respond

to acknowledged needs in higher education: greater access to post-secondary studies, more flexible curriculum offerings and recognition of non-traditional forms of learning. This paper describes several external degree programs of various institutions across the U.S. Some of the unique factors featured in these programs are: (1) geographically accessible learning centers; (2) few or no residency requirements; (3) student designated curricula; (4) independent study programs; and (5) work experience programs."[4]

THE SUPPLY AND DEMAND FOR EXTERNAL DEGREE PROGRAMS

There are undoubtedly tremendous criticisms and questions about the supply and demand for external degree programs. Are such programs of quality? Do they really measure up to the traditional programs? Are these programs promoting the deterioration of traditional academic standards and the mere "sale" of degrees? Many of these very criticisms and questions are generated by the assumption that the external degree programs and non-traditional educational delivery systems, in general, emphasize degrees rather than learning.

In the not too distant past, administrators, faculty, staff and students, through needs assessment and other means,

were able to realize and understand the needs for expanding external degree programs. Their planning, developing and implementing such programs are exemplified at the Open University in Great Britain, the State University of New York, Minnesota Metropolitan State College, Florida International University, Nova University, Community College of Vermont, Extended University of the University of California, California State University and Colleges, the University Without Walls sponsored by the Union For Experimental Colleges and Universities which has its headquarters at Antioch College. The list goes on and on and includes a variety of colleges and universities throughout this country.

Lets review some of the literature that speaks to the point of supply and demand. The Connecticut Commission For Higher Education, Hartford, presented the 1973 "findings and recommendations of a resource group in charge of improvement of educational opportunity in Connecticut for the master plan for higher education in Connecticut. Due to the major findings of a need for more flexibility of degree offerings and requirements within the state, the group makes the following recommendations: (1) A comprehensive program for earning undergraduate degrees and college credit by non-traditional methods should be developed and coordinated on a state wide basis including credit by examination,

credit by transfer, credit for off-campus study and credit for experience. (2) Priority for new opportunities in higher education should go to persons currently denied access especially veterans, minorities, low income groups, shift workers, housewives, the handicapped, the elderly, and those seeking additional career education. (3) Immediate attention should go to expanding the utilization of existing and new systems for delivery of higher education services through radio, television, press, computer and other technological resources."[5]

"Florida International University (FIU), The University of Alabama in Tuscoloosa, and Eagle University (Kentucky) have designed programs to meet the needs of non-traditional students. Eagle University, composed of nine universities from Tennessee, Kentucky, and Florida, extends education opportunities to servicemen and community members of Fort Campbell, Kentucky. FIU offers a student oriented rather than campus-based learning program. Emphasis is on a non-campus-based view of education, assessment of past experiences and negotiated, individual learning contracts. Similarly, the University of Alabama offers an external degree program. This program identifies 20 students for a pilot program and then designs 20 different programs around these students in each of these programs, the emphasis is placed on the needs of the students."[6]

In a report on the need for External Degree Programs in California, it is estimated, says Siroky, "that 2,715 individuals in the area served by California State University Sacramento are interested, educationally qualified, and willing to pay the fees for enrollment in External Degree Programs.... Convenience of time is the major reason for wanting to study in on external degree program. Second was the belief that family or personal needs would be met better, and third, the perceived relevance of external programs to job or work situations."[7]

Cross and Jones contends that, "Many thousands of indivudals are eager for new and continuing educational opportunities. Some students need greater flexibility in scheduling - courses, counseling, and financial assistance designed for part-time learners. Other students, with few credentials but with rich backgrounds of experience, need greater flexibility in the definition and certification of educational experience.... Others with brood-ranging minds but restricted physical mobility.... the largest group of people denied access to past secondary education because of limitations related to their physical presence on campus are those who are handicapped by geographical remoteness.... The physically handicapped and prison inmates have ample time for study and many have the desire to participate in substantial programs of education.... Servicemen and women

constitute a large group of potential students whose frequent moves interfere with the accumulation of degree credits.... Married women, with and without children, constitute another very large market for part-time study in "off" hours."[8]

In 1971 Nova University "was accredited as a special purpose (graduate) institution by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The Southern Association spent three years studying non-traditional study programs and thus, was receptive to external degree proposals in December 1971."[9] Nova University offers the Ed. D. Program for Educational Leaders and the D.P.A. and M.P.A. Graduate Programs in Public Administration.

"The University Without Walls (UWW) is sponsored by the Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities, an association which in February 1972, had twenty-five institutional members. The Union, which has its headquarters at Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio.... came into existence in 1964 as a way of cooperatively conducting innovation and experimentation in college teaching.... The institutions concerned represent a broad spectrum of colleges and universities and include: Antioch College; Bard College; Chicago State University; Friends World College; Goddard College; Howard University; Loretto Heights College; Morgan State College; New College (Sarasota, Florida); New York University; Northeastern Illinois University; Roger Williams

College; Shaw University; Skidmore College; Staten Island Community College; Stephens College; the University of Massachusetts, the University of Minnesota; the University of South Carolina; and Westminester College."[10]

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON PROVIDING EXTERNAL DEGREE PROGRAMS

There are critical factors that should be considered before planning, developing and implementing external degree programs. Many of the factors which will be addressed in the next few pages of this chapter will determine the failure or success of your programs. The perspectives on these factors should be carefully thought out and understood before venturing into the arena of external degree programs.

There are several questions posed by Haule that "should be addressed when considering external degree programs. For what clientele is the program to be planned.... What is the essential meaning of the degree to be designed..... How compatible with customary academic procedures should external degree requirements be..... How should the new program be financed.... How great is the interest in an external degree.... Who should take the initiative in advocating and administering an external degree.... How can faculty support be won for the program?"[11]

The Commission on Non-Traditional Study recommended the following in 1973: (1) "Full educational opportunity should be realistically available and feasible for all who may benefit from it, whatever their condition of life.... (9) Information regarding groups in our society now denied full access to education should be collected more systematically and continuously than at present and be widely distributed to policy makers.... within and outside the academic scene so that they may take appropriate action.... (12) There should be continued experimentation with forms of non-traditional study which minimize the traditional rigidities of campus life..... (17) The support of boards of trustees or regents, commissioners, presidents and other administrators, faculty senates.... and student organizations should be actively sought in an effort to introduce non-traditional forms to existing institutions.... (22) Faculty chosen for new programs should be creative, willing to learn new techniques required, and sufficiently flexible to make changes.... (25) Admission of students to non-traditional programs should be based on new kinds of examining procedures or more flexible and interpretive application of criteria.... (31) The public library should be strengthened to become a far more powerful instrument for non-traditional education than is now the case.... (32) The person who direct or certify the quality of alternate systems should continue to

examine their policies and practices to be sure that sound education is being provided by them. .. (47) New devices and techniques should be perfected to measure the outcomes of many types of non-traditional study and to assess the educative effect of work experience and community service.... (48) Systems of quality control should be built into the instructional and evaluative aspects of non-traditional study whenever possible."[12]

In conclusion, it is obvious that literature in the field on the need and supply of external degree programs goes on and on - nationally and internationally. There should be very little reluctance for administrators in institutions of higher education to realize that tremendous needs do exists in certain geographical locations. Certain clientele do not have access to higher education because of wide and varied circumstances and situations. Such needs should be accessed and accommodated to the best extent possible.

It is the author's belief that the administrator set the tone of the universities and colleges. The administrator ultimately determines what programs will be planned, developed and implemented, the admission of students, what courses will be offered, who will teach the courses, maximum number of students per class, when and where the courses will be taught and under what conditions. More specifically, the administrator,

to a considerable extent, determines the conditions and approaches of the educational delivery system. It must be concluded that the administrator is the prime mover of education.

In the words of the Commissioners on Non-Traditional Study, "Education, like every other important entity of society, must be responsive to the world it serves.... Its responses must be active, innovative and contemporary. And those who design education must do more than merely respond; they must develop initiatives of their own that reflect an awareness of changing necessities.

Yet there must be form and order and accountability in such responses. And there must be a powerful creativity that shapes a system to fit the time and the need, creativity that strengthens the process of change by moving in tandem with it. Such creativity must anticipate the future and act upon its foresight; it must experiment and then react forthrightly to the experience the experiments uncover."[13]

Out of the wide and varied needs for access to higher education have evolved the non-traditional educational delivery system, the external degree programs. Administrators, are you involved? Are you accessing the needs of clientele that do not have access to higher education? Are you moving in the direction of providing education to all people that have such needs? Are your faculty, staff, students, Boards of

Trustees/Regents, legislators and concerned community people involved?

As Martinko so eloquently stated, "Many higher education institutions across the United States have instituted non-traditional study programs that incorporate elements such as flexibility and individualized learning into the curriculum. Implementation of such programs serve to increase options and open doors such as: the identification of new segments of our society to be served; the use of interruption of study to enhance the educational process; the coordination of work and study to provide a total and more realistic learning experience, the non-residential factor as a plus rather than a minus; the recognition and evaluation of experience as part of learning."[14]

If change is to come about at your college or university in terms of providing external degree programs to meet identified educational needs, considerable leadership must come from the administrator. Of course, this will require evaluations and changes in traditional priorities, values and attitudes. Such changes will require the cooperation of faculty, staff, students, Board of Trustee/regents, legislators and concerned citizens. Participatory involvement in bringing about change will offer these constituents an understanding of the change, alleviate the fear, threatening and defensive reaction and thus, aid in acceptance and cooperation.

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